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Devil's Heartbeat

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"Devil's Heartbeat"
Legend

Informant:

Gena Vee Broderick is my grandmother. She was born during the Great Depression in Orem, Utah. She was nine years old during the attack on Pearl Harbor and she cites that and her awareness of WWII as the root of her intense patriotism. She loved attending school and was extremely bright. After graduating from high school when she was only in 10th grade, she worked in a potato chip factory to save money for BYU tuition. She met and married my grandfather and raised 9 children in Orem, Utah. She worked as an elementary school teacher and decorated wedding cakes to help support the family. She and my grandfather lived in England for a few years before moving back to Utah. Her subtle and exceedingly witty sense of humor never ceases. She finds happiness in spending time with her grandchildren, gardening, and caring for others.

Context:

My grandmother told me this story while I was at her house on the day after Thanksgiving. We were still satiated from the feast, but the aroma from the leftovers were enticing us to go back for a second time. We have a large family due to my grandma having 9 children and each in turn contributing their own. When we sat down in the off-limits living room (no children allowed), we could barely hear over the noise of my family members in the other rooms. Previously, I told her about folklore and asked if she would attempt to think of some stories or experiences to tell me. When she was young, she would travel to Blanding, Utah (a small city in Southern Utah) often. She would visit family down there and see friends. She is currently building a house and planning on living there soon. Each year, most of our family meets in Blanding for a fourth of July celebration. I had never heard this story before, but I could imagine the place she was speaking about. Next time we go to Blanding, I will definitely have her show me the exact place this legend takes place.

Text:

Ok and then there is another one that I think is funny. Down in Blanding there's a road that goes way out to the canyon. Have you been there? [Me: Um, no.] And you look across there are Indian ruins all down around there. And so, the guys liked to take their dates down there [laughter], they take their sweeties down there to make-out [laughter]. But, when you get down there, this light just comes on

and off right around the horizon, just on and off [she is gesturing with her hands a pulsing light, opening and closing her fists] and it is so eerie and it's kind of frightening you just think, because there is nothing to do, there is no light or anything it just does that and they call it the "Devil's Heartbeat" because that's what it does it throbs [gesturing again] like that and then they think that the devil's watching them down there and it's kind of scary you know it's just kind of a little bit of an eerie daring thing so that's where they go to make-out. You have to be very brave then to go there.

Texture:

My grandma was eager to tell me what she knew about this legend. We could not help but laugh throughout, most likely because I had never heard her say the phrase "make-out" before. She was resembling an active bearer. She was speaking with her body language and gesturing more than usual. It sounded as if she had definitely been to see this Devil's Heartbeat herself more than a few times (even though she did not admit it). She made the act of tripping this legend seem more exciting than dangerous.

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